Devastation of Forests due to Fire

1684. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether vast areas of thick forests in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and other States have been ravaged and devastated by forest fires over the years;

(b) if so, the extent and areas of such forests at present; and

(c) the plans and strategy drawn out for restoration of such forests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The fires in the forest areas occur frequently during the dry season of the year and are of the nature of ground fires only. As such these fires do not cause devastation or ravaging of forests. In Hill States like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh incidences of forest fire mostly occur in the Pine forest areas where dry Pine needles burn. Even such fires do not cause devastation or ravaging of forests.

(c) The State Forest Departments take preventive measures for warding off such fires by creating fire lines and generating awareness among the people about the fire hazards. In most States local people are involved through the Joint Forest Management Committees for prevention and control of incidences of forest fire. The Government of India under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes also provide financial assistance to States for forest fire control and management. As there being no devastation of forests, restoration works are not required to be planned. However, regeneration of younger crop is supplemented during rainy season.

Biosphere reserves

1685. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of potential sites are under consideration of Government for declaring as biosphere reserves;

(b) if so, their names, location-wise;

(c) by when these sites are likely to be sanctioned;

(d) whether, after declaring these sites as biosphere reserves, the fragile Himalayan environment region could be protected from hazardous activities occurring/likely to occur in the region; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Cold Desert biosphere reserve in Himachal Pradesh and Sheshachalam biosphere reserve in Andhra Pradesh are the sites identified for designation as biosphere reserves.

(c) After receipt of the consent and project documents containing delineation of areas for these biosphere reserves from concerned State Governments, these sites can be considered for